

Meiji Village Education Museum

The Toyoma Higher Elementary School was housed in this U-shaped building from 1888 to 1973. Although the school has closed, the Meiji Village Education Museum has recreated several of its classrooms to illustrate how school life has changed along with society, showcasing everything from the history of school lunches to the different models of sewing machines that were used for teaching vocational skills. Textbook pages and homework displayed along the walls offer a glimpse into how elementary school students in past eras experienced World War II and other historical events.

The building was constructed under the supervision of Yamazoe Kisaburō (1843–1923), an architect from Echigo Province (now Niigata Prefecture). Together with his mentor, the master carpenter Matsuo Ihei, Yamazoe went to Europe to build the Japanese pavilion for the 1873 Vienna World Exposition. He remained in Europe to study Western architecture and went

on to construct Western-style buildings in Japan.

A strict taskmaster and perfectionist, Yamazoe demanded that each roof tile of this building be weighed, soaked in water, and weighed again to measure how much water it would absorb before declaring it fit for use. His uncompromising attitude caused some problems: There are multiple accounts of aggravated workers removing the ladders and leaving Yamazoe stuck on the school roof to vent their frustration.

Despite the conflicts, the building was completed, and today it is a fine example of blended Western and Japanese design elements, which was characteristic of architecture in the Meiji period (1868–1912). It is now a symbol of Tome's Miyagi Meiji Village, and in 1981, it was nationally designated an Important Cultural Property. Photography is encouraged throughout the museum and grounds.